



JUNE 2018

THE EAST AFRICAN SUSWATCH E-BULLETIN (FORMERLY THE LVEMPII CIVIL SOCIETY WATCH E BULLETIN)

A Monthly from the East African Sustainability Watch Network founded by Uganda Coalition for Sustainable Development (UCSD), Tanzania Coalition for Sustainable Development (TCSD) and SusWatch Kenya

Civil Society Organizations Call upon the EAC to incorporate the Paris Agreement Provisions in the revised Climate Change Policy and Proposed Regional Law

Climate change related factors rank highly as major threats confronting the East African Community (EAC) region, though its CO₂ emission estimates is only 4.7 million tons per year by 2030 (EAC Vision 2050). These factors include warmer weather, environmental degradation, food insecurity in the wider region, and diseases outbreaks

Out of this concern, partner CSOs and members of SusWatch Kenya, TaTEDO – Centre for Sustainable Energy Services, and Uganda Coalition for Sustainable Development (UCSD) have come up with a Policy Brief that has recommendations to the ongoing review of the East African Community Climate Change Policy, Strategy & master plan that that seek to Create momentum for climate action in East Africa in line with the bottom-up structure of the Paris Agreement, where action is not conditional upon international rules. The recommendations are specifically made on the EAC roadmap for Implementation of the Paris Agreement, the EAC Climate Change Policy framework (under review), and the proposed EAC Climate Change bill.

The EAC Roadmap aims at translating the Paris Agreement in terms of concrete steps to be taken by the EAC Partner States to implement key resolutions of this Agreement relevant to them through nine major activities. The Roadmap spells out how to approach implementation of the NDCs, translating what the Paris Agreement means in terms of concrete next steps for the EAC Partner States and offering advice on how countries might take this work forward from 2016 to 2021.

The EAC Climate Change Policy framework under review, includes three EAC documents which are distinct but complementary, that focus on improving regional cooperation on climate change through a variety of policy instruments, plans and strategies. These include a regional Climate Change Policy, Climate Change Strategy, and the Climate Change Master Plan.

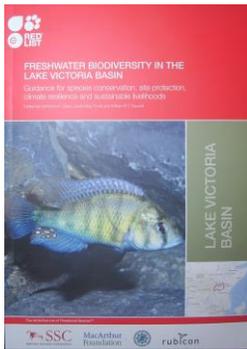
The 3 CSO networks caution that National Action Plans - Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) of Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania are inclined towards large scale projects in energy, agriculture, forestry, waste management and infrastructure such as up scaling the geothermal project in Kenya for energy production, while less attention is given towards the small scale projects implemented by the local communities such as energy saving cook stoves and small scale biogas plants, that contribute towards greenhouse reduction emissions.

They believe that these small scale projects contribute to poverty reduction in East Africa as well, since majority of the population still live in rural settings where majority of the poor heavily rely on biomass energy. ‘This will be a practical step for East Africa to permanently tip the scale towards faster action and stronger ambition in their NDCs and also boost development. In this way the NDCs can better contribute to keep global warming below 1.5 degrees Celsius and also reduce poverty’, the Policy brief emphasizes.

Through their Policy Brief, the 3 CSOs among others call for a review the current engagement mechanisms and processes in order to institutionalize wider stakeholder involvement to include vulnerable groups, communities like pastoralists, fishers, urban poor people, mountain-based communities, farmers, women, youths, disabled persons, among others. ‘Institutionalized consultations with the diverse groups should enable input into the periodic adaptation communication on adaptation priorities, needs, plans and actions at national level while informing EAC interventions at the regional level, the Policy brief notes.

Read the Full Civil Society Brief: Incorporating the Paris Agreement in the EAC Climate Change Framework: <http://www.ugandacoalition.or.ug/sites/default/files/Final%20Regional%20Brief%20No.3%281%29.pdf>

IUCN identifies 39 freshwater Key Biodiversity Areas in the Lake Victoria basin as a first step in developing a regional sites network to better represent freshwater biodiversity.



The International Union of Conservation of Nature (IUCN) released a report on May 30, 2018 titled: 'Freshwater biodiversity in the Lake Victoria Basin: guidance for species conservation, site protection, climate resilience and sustainable livelihoods'. The Report identifies popular fish species, crabs, molluscs and shrimps that are a source of food in the greater eastern African region as facing greatest threat from over-exploitation, industrial pollution and invasive species like water hyacinth.

This report is a result of an assessment done by IUCN field researchers on the status of 204 species native to the Lake Victoria basin, which revealed high levels of threat aggravated by human activities and climatic shocks.

Quoted by Xinhuanet News Agency, Catherine Sayer, IUCN program officer and co-author of the report, said that harnessing big data is key to obtaining an accurate picture of the extent of degradation in the vast Lake Victoria basin.

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"We still know very little about many species in the basin. It is important we build on the data used in this report to fully understand the species distribution and population, and threats to species, in order to minimize the future impact of biodiversity loss on local communities," Sayer said.

The IUCN report proposed a raft of measures that include revamping of environmental policies, regional cooperation, public awareness and harnessing of local innovations to reverse loss of species in the Lake Victoria basin

Specifically the Report identifies 39 sites in the Lake Victoria basin as freshwater Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs). These are sites contributing significantly to the global persistence of biodiversity and therefore inform: potential expansion and management of protected areas networks; identification of sites under international conventions for example Ramsar (wetlands) sites; environmental policies and safeguards standards.

These freshwater KBAs represent the first step in developing a regional sites network to better represent freshwater biodiversity. National KBA coordination groups should be established to build upon this work.

13 of these freshwater KBAs follow the boundaries of existing protected areas, Ramsar sites or KBAs. However, in most cases freshwater species, with the exception of water birds, are not the focus of conservation and management actions within these sites. Given this new information on freshwater species presence within existing protected areas, efforts are now required to develop new focus on their conservation within site management plans. 26 new sites have been delineated as freshwater KBAs. These sites represent important gaps in the protection of freshwater species within the current protected areas network. 82 potential Site Champions have been identified. These are individuals and organizations best placed to raise awareness and to help implement actions to safeguard these globally important sites.

Read the full report 'Freshwater biodiversity in the Lake Victoria Basin: guidance for species conservation, site protection, climate resilience and sustainable livelihoods' from <https://portals.iucn.org/library/node/47642>

Read the Policy brief: 'Freshwater biodiversity in the Lake Victoria basin - priorities for conservation action from https://www.iucn.org/sites/dev/files/content/documents/2018/policy_brief_english_final.pdf

World Environment Day 2018: Uganda Reveals Plan to Ban Single-Use Plastic Carry Bags



The plastic nuisance

Annually, June 5th is marked by the UN as World Environment Day, set aside since 1974 to promote “worldwide awareness and action for the protection of our environment.” In a message, UN Secretary-General António Guterres urged all people to reject single-use plastic items, and warned that growing levels of plastic waste were becoming unmanageable, saying “every year, more than eight million tons end up in the oceans.

Uganda joined the rest of the world to commemorate the World Environment day. The main event was held at Mbale Municipal Cricket ground under the theme “Beat Plastic Pollution”.

The French Ambassador to Uganda – H.E. Stephanie Rivoal who represented the European Delegation noted that people continue to consume plastics which is harmful to both people and the environment. She urged the congregation to start reducing use of excess plastics because people cannot continue to live in harmful polluted environments, because we need to conserve the environment for the next generation. “In Uganda plastics contribute to the decrease in fish population in Lake Victoria”. She added that “We need to change the mind set on plastics. As we pollute the environment in Africa, other countries pay for the effects of climate change”, she said.

At the same function, the Minister of Water and Environment who represented the President of Uganda told the congregation about the plan to ban single use plastic carry bags. “My message to the plastics industry is that you should manufacture, distribute and sell only permitted quality plastics. The continued manufacture of banned products must stop,” the President said in a speech read on his behalf by Water and Environment minister Sam Cheptoris at the national event to mark the World Environment day.

Dr. Goretti Kitutu the State Minister for Environment urged residents of Mbale to get their town to the old glory when it was once the cleanest town in East Africa. “If we can beat plastics then we could be on the right track to take the town back to its lost glory”, she said. She said they would soon table a paper to cabinet to ban plastic polythene bags – locally known as Kaveera.

In 2017 November , the United Nations Environment programme engaged Governments, Civil Society/Major Groups, Science and the Private Sector to enable them to work together to tackle the shared and unprecedented challenges the world is facing regarding plastic pollution.

Ministers of Environment of all countries around the world gathered in Nairobi from 29 November - 6 December 2017, at the 3rd Meeting of the Open-Ended Committee of Permanent Representatives to UN Environment Programme and 3rd Session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-3) under the overall theme “Towards a Pollution-Free Planet.” to discuss the status, trends and actions needed to be taken to address pollution in all its forms: air, marine, freshwater, soil and land, including chemicals and waste. They were joined by private sector representatives, civil society organizations and other stakeholders.

Civil Society, represented by Major Groups and Stakeholders had a critical role in supporting the decision making process at UNEA-3. The event also saw inspiring examples from various parts of the world, including host country Kenya’s ban on the use and sale of single-use plastic bags, demonstrating the transformative action that governments and communities can already take. In this context, UNEA-3 might be remembered as pivotal in setting the first steps towards a framework for action.

More about single-use plastics in the UNEP report (2018): ‘Single-Use Plastics - A Roadmap for Sustainability’: https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/25496/singleUsePlastic_sustainability.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y